

Public Involvement

Chapter 6

Throughout the planning process, the interdisciplinary team (IDT) gathered public input on issues, the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action. The scoping process included a public meeting, briefings with interested stakeholders, letters and updates, articles in the quarterly NEPA Schedule of Proposed Actions, and the development of a web homepage. These activities were used to identify the issues, alternatives and concerns to be considered in the development of a Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan and to keep the public informed and involved throughout the planning process.

Calendar Year 1999

Analysis of the Management Situation Report

In February 1999, a report called “Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) for the Curlew National Grassland” was released for public review. This report included information on the current resource conditions and uses of the Grassland, a description of a range of Desired Conditions, and a synopsis of what management direction in the 1985 Caribou National Forest and Curlew National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan needed to change to meet the range of Desired Conditions. Public comment was invited on the findings contained in the AMS.

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed February 16, 1999. The objective of the PIP was to generate comments from interested groups and individuals about the assessment of the current health of Grassland resources, the preliminary indication of management changes that may be needed to improve or maintain the health of these resources, and the proposed range of desired conditions, including new or alternative desired conditions.

Key messages, Frequently Asked Questions, and Talking Points were developed. Key contacts were made in person or by telephone to the following interested stakeholders to encourage comment on the AMS:

Oneida County Commissioners	February 27, 1999
Idaho Wildlife Federation	February 25, 1999
Curlew Grazing Association	February 23, 1999
Buist Grazing Association	February 23, 1999
Region 5 Wildlife Council	February 23, 1999
Bureau of Land Management	February 24, 1999
National Wildlife Federation	February 25, 1999

Briefing meetings (See Project File for meeting notes) were held with interested stakeholders, including the following:

Idaho Congressional Staff Representatives briefed on February 23, 1999
State of Idaho Sage Grouse Local Working Group briefed on February 24, 1999
Idaho Department of Fish & Game briefed on February 24, 1999
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service briefed on March 1, 1999
Shoshone-Bannock Indian Nation briefed on March 3, 1999

The *Idaho State Journal*, *Post Register*, and *Idaho Enterprise* newspapers and local television and radio stations received a news release. (See Project File – Public Involvement for subsequent news coverage)

Forest employees were briefed on March 3, 1999. The Regional Forester, Intermountain Region was briefed by telephone on February 19, 1999. Copies of the AMS were sent electronically to other regional office employees for review on February 19, 1999 (See Project File for list).

The AMS was mailed to the general public (See Project File for mailing list) and posted to the web homepage on February 25, 1999. Sixteen letters were received. A total of 123 individual comments were identified from these letters:

Desired Conditions	16
Economics	5
Fire	5
Livestock grazing	21
Miscellaneous	12
Monitoring	6
Noxious Weeds	1
Private In-holdings	1
Recreation	2
Riparian Areas	10
Roadless areas	1
Vegetation	22
Watershed Condition	2
Wildlife	11
Wildlife Habitat	<u>8</u>
Total	123

The IDT reviewed comments and completed a Content Analysis of the comments received. (See Project File.)

On May 3, 1999 the Content Analysis and a Scoping statement with a Proposed Action were mailed to commenters and posted to web homepage.

Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

On May 3, 1999 a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement that included the Proposed Action appeared in the *Federal Register*. The *Federal Register* notice initiated the formal scoping process.

The IDT received six comment letters to the Notice of Intent with approximately 55 comments:

Collaborative Efforts	1
Economics	1
Fire	8
Private In-holdings	1
Livestock Grazing	9
Miscellaneous	2
Monitoring	3
Riparian Areas	5
Roadless Areas	1
Vegetation	13
Watershed	1
Wildlife Habitat	<u>10</u>
Total	55

The IDT reviewed and completed a Content Analysis on these letters on August 27, 1999 (See Project File). Comments received on the AMS and NOI were used to develop the following preliminary issues:

- Sagebrush Canopy Cover
- Vegetation Understory Composition
- Mountain Brush Management
- Riparian/Wetland Conditions
- Reserves/Preserves
- Watershed Condition
- Economic and Social Values
- Intermingled Private Lands
- Wildlife Habitat
- Livestock Grazing
- Prescribed Fire in Sage Grouse Habitat
- Travel Management

On September 1, 1999, the NOI Content Analysis and a synopsis of the preliminary issues were mailed to interested stakeholders.

Community Gathering in Malad, Idaho

A Community Gathering, using an open house format, was held on Thursday, November 18, 1999 at the Malad Elementary School from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. A press release, invitation, and briefing package that included preliminary issues and draft alternatives were mailed to the public on November 9, 1999. The objectives of the Community Gathering included validation of the preliminary issues used to develop the draft alternatives, a preview of more detailed alternatives under consideration, and the solicitation of public comments about the preliminary issues and draft alternatives.

An additional 17 comments were received during the Community Gathering. A Content Analysis was completed on these additional comments. (See Project File). Comments received at Community Gathering included:

Alternatives	19
Intermingled Lands	4
Livestock Grazing	6
Miscellaneous	5
Process Points	7
Socio-Economic	4
Vegetation Treatments	7
Wildlife Habitat	<u>3</u>
Total Comments	55

These comments were incorporated into the draft alternatives.

In addition, briefing meetings were held with the Regional Forester, Intermountain Region, on November 5, 1999 and with the Idaho Congressional Staff Representatives on November 9, 1999.

Calendar Year 2000

A Draft EIS and Draft Grassland Plan were prepared during 2000. These draft documents were released to the public in September 2000. The Environmental Protection Agency published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on October 20, 2000 (page 63076, EIS No. 00349).

Several briefings were conducted in association with the release of the Draft EIS and Draft Plan:

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) conducted a briefing for the Regional Forester's staff in Ogden, Utah on July 28, 2000 to review the preliminary draft documents. On August 7, 2000, the IDT met with the Regional Forester in Ogden, Utah to discuss the draft documents and review the "Preferred Alternative" selection. In addition, the IDT prepared a 4-page written

overview of the DEIS and Draft Plan for review by the Forest Service's Washington Office in August, 2000 (See Project file for meeting notes and related documents).

The Draft EIS and Draft Plan were mailed to interested individuals, groups, and agencies in September 2000. (See Project File for Mailing list). The documents were also posted to the Forest's web page in September 2000.

Over the year, many articles appeared in local newspapers, including the Idaho State Journal (Pocatello, ID), The Enterprise (Malad, ID) and the Post Register (Idaho Falls, ID) regarding the Curlew National Grassland, status of sage grouse populations, release of the Draft EIS and Draft Plan, and other issues regarding the area (See Project file).

On October 6, 2000 several team members and the Forest Supervisor briefed Idaho's Congressional staff in Pocatello, Idaho (See Project File).

On October 8, 2000, District Ranger Gerald Tower met with Oneida County Commissioners and briefed them on the release of the Draft EIS and Draft Plan.

A public meeting was held on December 7, 2000 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in Malad, Idaho. Press releases were sent to the Idaho State Journal and the Malad Enterprise newspapers announcing the meetings. Articles on the meeting appeared on 11/16/00 in the Idaho State Journal and on 11/23/00 in the Malad Enterprise. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting. The meeting included a PowerPoint presentation, display boards, and a Question and Answer session with the Forest Supervisor (See Project File).

Consultation with Other Agencies in the Preparation of the Draft EIS

The agencies listed below were consulted during the preparation and analysis of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Shoshone-Bannock Tribe
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Idaho Department of Agriculture
Idaho Department of Fish & Game
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho Wildlife Services

List of Recipients

The following individuals, organizations, and agencies received a copy of the Draft EIS. This list was developed from those who responded to scoping and other interested parties, and includes agencies that are required to be contacted during the development of Environmental Impact Statements. Additional copies of the Draft EIS are available from the Caribou National Forest Supervisor's Office in Idaho Falls or the Westside Ranger District Offices in Pocatello and Malad.

Individuals

Available upon request

Indian Tribes

Shoshone-Bannock Tribe

Federal, State, County, and City**Agencies**

U.S. Congressional Staffs

U.S. EPA

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Idaho Department of Fish & Game

Idaho Department of Environmental
Quality

Idaho Department of Lands

Idaho Department of Agriculture

Bureau of Land Management

Idaho Wildlife Services

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation
Service

Oneida County Commission

City of Malad

Oneida County Extension Service

Media Outlets

Idaho State Journal

Idaho Enterprise

Organizations

Idaho Watersheds Project

Idaho Wildlife Federation

The Ecology Center

Region V Wildlife Council

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

National Wildlife Federation

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

No. Rockies Natural Resource Center

Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Pheasants Forever

Sierra Club

Forest Guardians

Idaho Sporting Congress

Defenders of Wildlife

Idaho Cattlemen's Association

Idaho Falconers Association

Blue Ribbon Coalition

Idaho Bird Hunters

Utah Council, Trout Unlimited

Forest Conservation Coalition

Calendar Year 2001

The comment period on the Draft EIS and Draft Plan was scheduled to close on January 29, 2001. At the request of several individuals and groups, Forest Supervisor Jerry Reese extended the comment period for an additional 60 days. The comment period closed on March 30, 2001.

The Environmental Protection Agency published its review of the draft documents in the Federal Register on April 27, 2001 (page. 21138).

A briefing was conducted with the BLM Pocatello Area Office on April 27, 2001.

The National Wildlife Federation, under FOIA, requested a copy of all comment letters received on the Draft EIS and Draft Plan on May 2, 2001. A copy of all comment letters was sent to this organization in May 2001.

The Forest also received a Congressional Inquiry regarding the Curlew Draft EIS and Draft Plan on May 2, 2001.

The IDT received a total of 66 public comment letters on the Draft EIS and Draft Plan. More than 500 comments were identified and reviewed by the IDT. A content analysis was conducted using a Microsoft Access Database. Each individual comment received an identifying comment number associated with the comment letter number. Unless the comment letter identified the individual, agency or non-governmental group sending the letter, the IDT did not have access to the letters' authors. This was done to improve objectivity in responding to public comments. Comments were separated into categories as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Comments Received</u>
Air Quality	8
Alternatives	32
Alternative G	21
Draft EIS	6
Economics	22
Fire	9
Fisheries	1
Global Warming	1
Hydrology	1
Lands	1
Laws and Regulations	12
Livestock Grazing	59
Miscellaneous comments	2
Revised Draft Plan	40
Riparian Areas	18
Soils	6
Vegetation	93
Water Quality	4
Watershed Conditons	3
Wildlife Habitat	92
Comment Noted	<u>127</u>
Total	558

Appendix M contains the comprehensive Content Analysis of Public Comments.

The following people, agencies, and organizations submitted comments on the Draft EIS and Draft Plan:

Letter No.	Name	Affiliation
1	Garth Baxter	US Forest Service
2	Joe Williams	None
3	Robert Brassfield	USFS-Region 1
4	Paul Nordwall	USFS-Retired
5	Clyron Mills	None
6	Craig Criddle	None
7	Mike Vestal	None
8	Craig Criddle	None
9	William Laycock	University of Wyoming
10	Frank Beitia	USFS-Retired
11	Gary T. Davis	None
12	Frank Gunnell	USFS-Retired
13	J. Juan Spillet	USFS-Retired
14	Ron Skidmore	None
15	Leonard/Marilyn Wilcox	None
16	Randy Skidmore	None
17	Miriam Austin	Western Watershed Project
18	RonDell Skidmore	None
19	Eric Krasa	Pheasants Forever
20	Tim Keller	Oneida Cty Soil Board
21	Carl L. Wambolt	Montana State University
22	Dexter Pitman	Idaho Fish & Game
23	Roy Neal	None
24	George Neal	None
25	Greg Mladenka	None
26	John R. Swanson	None
27	Jack Fisher	Idaho Wildlife Federation
28	Ken Eliason	None
29	Dale R. Daniels	None
30	Kay E. Harris	None
31	David Eliason	None
32	Jess/Marilyn Showell	None
33	Jess/Marilyn Showell	None
34	Renelle Skidmore	None
35	David Mills	None
36	Charles Schwartz	Idaho Falconers
37	Frank Hill	None
38	Wendell Johnson	USFS-Retired
39	Mark Ipsen	None
40	C. Lyle Arbon	None
41	Matthew Tubbs	None
42	Vard Neal	None
43	Scott C. Bedke	Idaho Cattlemen's Association
44	Mike Diem	Boise NF
45	Craig Criddle	None
46	Keene Hueftle	SE Idaho Environmental Council
47	Russell Boyer/Ross Anderson	None
48	Jay Anderson	Idaho State University
49	Ben Deeble	National Wildlife Federation

Letter No.	Name	Affiliation
50	Diane Riley	Idaho DEQ
51	Dale F. Tubbs	None
52	Kirk Nielsen	None
53	Melanie Arbon	None
54	Gale Neal	None
55	Lorraine Neal	None
56	Alden Neal	None
57	Ron C. Eliason	None
58	Preston A. Sleeper	US Dept. of Interior
59	Ken Crane/Patrick Takasugi	Idaho Dept. of Agriculture
60	Dallan A. Nalder	None
61	Judith Leckron	EPA
62	Elden Neilsen	None
63	John Talberth	Forest Conservation Council
64	Internal Notes of Meeting	Oneida County Commissioners
65	Deb Mignogno	US. Fish & Wildlife Service
66	James May	USDI-BLM